

## **A WORLD-WIDE PROBLEM FAR GREATER THAN Y2K**

Romans 1:18-25

**Intro:** Every year after Christmas we have just one week until we are in a new year. For many years it has been my practice in approaching Christmas to give a message, or a series of messages, on the birth of Christ. And I do it even though I am afraid that most people today give little or no thought at all to the coming of Christ. And if they do, they have no idea as to Who He really was, and is, nor do they understand why He came to earth. In fact, most people ask no questions as to why we speak of Him coming to the earth, rather than speaking of His birth as we would speak of the birth of any other child. By that I mean, we say that a certain person was born. All of us here today have a birthday. But we do not say that “we came to earth.” We existed nowhere else until we were conceived, and then born. There are some people who believe that their present existence is just one in a series of lives that they live on earth, but they have absolutely no proof, and no reason, to make such a claim.

Whether December 25 was the actual birthday of the Lord Jesus Christ, is open to question. In fact, it seems very unlikely that he was born in December. The fact that the shepherds were out in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night, argues for a time during the year when the weather would be better than it usually is in the winter months. Nevertheless, December 25 has been observed for a long time as the birthday of our Lord, and it probably never will be changed – unless it eventually becomes a day when no reference will be made at all to Christ.

I mention this because the very fact that people do not know, or if they know, they are inclined to reject the teaching of Scripture concerning the birth of Christ, also explains why they do not really understand the concept of a new year. The coming of a new year should remind us of the passing of time. All of us, if we live throughout this year, will have another birthday. We will be a year older than we were a year ago on our birthday. But we never know from what day until the next what is going to happen. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived with the one exception of our Lord, said, “Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Prove. 27:1). And James in the NT expressed the same idea when he wrote,

13 Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get

gain:

14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.

16 But now ye rejoyce in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.

17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin (James 4:13-17).

You and I have no control over how long we are going to live, or what we are going to do on certain days. You might plan to go someplace for a whole year, but your plans are only going to be carried out if that is the Lord's will for you. If it isn't, you are wasting your time to make such plans.

Perhaps you remember the occasion in our Lord's life here on earth when a man came to our Lord and asked Him to make his brother divide their inheritance with him. But the Lord refused to act as a judge in that case. Instead He said this to the two brothers.

15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God (Luke 12:15-21).

This man had plans for "many years" to come, not knowing that he was going to die that very night!

You see, God is in control of time. He is in control of each of our lives whether we know it or not. There was a time for us to be born, and there is a time for us to die. We didn't decide the first, and it is not up to us to

decide the last.

At midnight next Friday night we will enter into a new year, but let me add, "The Lord willing." Throughout all of our lives when we have written down the date, it has been "19" something or other – 1920 or 1938 or 1943 or during this present year in which we are living, 1999. But starting next year we will be in the year 2000, the Lord willing. And this has brought into our conversation those two letters and one number, and you all have heard it: Y2K. It is *the year two thousand*.

Now because of all of the electronics we have, all of the computers, etc., there has been great concern about what this will mean to all of us. How will it affect our water supply, or electrical power, or even our food supply? Will we be able to get gasoline for our cars? Will hospitals be able to provide services for us? And the questions go on and on. I doubt if anyone really has the answer. But many people are storing up food and water so that they will be able to cope with what they think will be temporary inconveniences with services that we have taken for granted in the past. Most of you have heard the discussions that are going on, and you have your own convictions about what it all may mean.

But there is another problem that has come up, and that is that at the turn of this coming new year terrorists may be preparing terrible things right here in our country. Police, especially in our larger cities, are even now on the alert for anything suspicious. Security is increased at our airports. We are being advised to stay out of large crowds. This, of course, is a potential problem which will not necessarily be limited to the new year. We are certainly living not only in uncertain times, but in dangerous times. And our authorities tell us that there is no absolute guarantee that there will not be trouble, possibly big trouble.

People in America are willing to put up with almost anything as long as the economy is thriving like it is. And yet we ought to know that "riches are not forever," as we read in Proverbs 27:24. And in Proverbs 23:4, 5 we read this:

4 Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.

5 Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.

But we also have the words of our Lord Jesus Christ Who said,

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and

rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matt. 6:19-21).

Now this brings me to the main point that I want to make today on this last week of 1999.

The problems I have mentioned (and there are many others that could be mentioned) – but the problems I have mentioned are world-wide. If Y2K means a disruption of our lives, it will be that way all over the world. Terrorism is a problem that every nation on the face of the earth has to face. If there is a financial crash in our country, it will affect the whole world, just as we have seen that financial problems in the Far East as well as in Europe can affect our economy here in the United States.

But there is a far great problem that is world-wide, a problem of eternal consequences, that will make all of these other problems look like nothing in comparison. And I am talking about:

## **I. THE PROBLEM OF SIN.**

I got out a dictionary that I recently bought, and looked up the word *sin*. And this is what I learned. It told me that sin is “a transgression of a religious or moral law, esp. when deliberate.” And then this secular dictionary said that sin is “a condition of estrangement from God as a result of breaking God’s law.

Then I got out the dictionary that I had when I was in seminary over fifty years ago to see what it had to say. And this is what I read: Sin is the “transgression of the law of God.” And then it went on to say that sin is “to violate the divine law by actual transgression, or by neglect.”

Now I am not talking about what our good theologians have to say about sin; this is how secular dictionaries define sin. In over fifty years there has been no real change in the definition of sin, from man’s perspective. So you can see why people don’t want to talk about sin. If you talk about sin, you have to talk about God because it is God Who defines what sin is! Sin is any and everything that is contrary to what God is.

Sin is at the basis of all of the problems that we have in our world today. And just as the definitions that my dictionaries, old and new, give to me are unchanged, so sin itself never changes because God never changes.

***But here is the greatest of all problems. And I will read it to you right out of God's Word, beginning with Romans chapter 1, and verse 18. (Read.)***

I am not minimizing at all the problems that we are facing today, and the even greater problems we may have to face in the future if we continue to live like we are living today in America, but I am saying that ultimately there is a far greater disaster on down in the future for every person who fails to recognize the problem, and then to do something about it.

## **II. THE WRATH OF GOD REVEALED.**

Paul said that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against and unrighteousness of men who hold (hold down, suppress) the truth in unrighteousness. My question is, **“Where has God revealed His wrath?”**

Basically, there is one answer: **He has revealed it in His Word.** The person who says that God is love, and only love, hasn't read all of the Bible. The Bible tells us that “God is angry with the wicked every day” (Psa. 7:11).

But let us follow up on this subject a little more in detail. How does the Word declare, or reveal the wrath of God? Let me mention four ways:

### **A. By showing us what sin does to people.**

Please follow in your Bibles as I read the rest of our text.

### **B. By telling us of those times when God has judged people and nations because of their sins.**

What about the flood in the days of Noah?

What about Sodom and Gomorrah?

What about His judgment upon Egypt because of their treatment of the people of Israel?

And you see His judgments even upon His people when they have sinned against Him deliberately.

The Bible reveals to us a God Who loves righteousness, but Who hates iniquity in all of its forms.

But there is a third way, and this the greatest way, His wrath against sin.

**C. By the death of His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, on the Cross.**

Cf. Isa. 53:6; 10; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:18.

Read also the accounts of our Lord's death in the Gospels.

**D. By the final judgment which will be the punishment of those who have not trusted in Christ.**

I am speaking about an eternal hell. I agree with those of you who feel that this is the most difficult of all doctrines to accept, but if we reject it, it is because:

- 1) We don't sufficiently understand the holiness of God.
- 2) We don't understand how terrible sin is in the sight of our holy God.
- 3) We don't understand how necessary it was for Christ to die, and what value God placed upon the death of His Son.

The Lord Jesus had more to say about hell than anyone else in Scripture. Cf. the judgment of the nations in Acts 25, esp. vv. 41-46.

Three times in Luke 9 our Lord spoke of hell (Gehenna) as a place where "their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

**Concl:** I don't know what, if anything, is going to happen as the new year starts. I don't know what, if any, disruptions will occur. And as far as terrorism is concerned, I can only say that with the way we as a nation have despised God and gone our own way, I am surprised that we haven't come under greater judgment from God before now. I think He has been speaking to us in many of the things that have happened, but we are not listening.

But let me ask you this in closing: What would you think of a person who

was making all kinds of preparations for Y2K, but who has done nothing to escape the eternal judgment of God because of their sins? Or what would you think of people who were doing all that they could to protect themselves from terrorists, but who were doing nothing to escape the terror of the Lord?

There may or may not be disruptions at the beginning of the new year, but there is no question about divine judgment upon those who have not taken refuge in Christ. We may or may not experience terrorism in our country, but there is no question about the terror of God upon all who fail to trust in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. So may God have mercy upon any here today who have not sought shelter from the judgment of God through Christ. He is the only Savior. Any other attempt to prepare to meet God will most certainly be doomed to failure.

There are two other things to keep in mind. You don't know when you are going to die, and so it is best to be prepared to meet the Lord. The other is that we don't know when the Lord will come. But He is coming, and it is the height of foolishness not to be ready. So come to Christ today, right now. Don't delay any longer, but make sure you are ready to meet the Lord.